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2026 Will Belong to Partners as CIOs Reject OEM-Driven Sales

By 2026, India's partner community is set to witness exponential growth, driven by a clear frustration among CIOs with dealing directly with technology brands. For many enterprise leaders, direct engagement with OEMs has too often meant being pushed the latest products rather than being offered innovative, business-aligned

solutions. This dynamic is creating a massive opening for the partner ecosystem, which is increasingly being viewed as the true co-innovator and trusted problem solver.

Research by Foundry highlights that 68% of CIOs globally now plan to consolidate their vendor landscape, cutting the number of suppliers by as much as 20%. The reason

is simple: CIOs no longer want to play referee between multiple OEMs that pitch overlapping solutions. Instead, they prefer a single point of contact in the form of channel partners who can simplify vendor complexity, integrate best-of-breed solutions, and deliver measurable business outcomes. Reliability and trust are central to this preference. As Tom Lynch,

CIO of Cook County, Illinois, observed, "Primarily, vendors should be reliable. If a vendor delivers consistently on their obligations, then I'll be far more likely to reuse them later." This sentiment resonates deeply in India, where CIOs are under pressure to deliver digital outcomes at speed without being overwhelmed by vendor sprawl.



Across Indian industries, this shift is already visible. Kinjal Shah, CIO of Yes Securities, underlines the point: "From KYC to risk engines and trading platforms, we maintain a multi-vendor ecosystem, but the key is evaluating them annually and co-developing with trusted partners."

and cost-optimized cloud migration frameworks for digital-native enterprises.



Similarly, Rajkumar Ayella, Group CIO of KEC International, has streamlined his vendor base: "We're narrowing to two or three core vendors in each domain, but security still requires multiple players." Both perspectives point to the growing importance of partners as orchestrators, managing multiple niche vendors under one umbrella while providing CIOs a single face of accountability.



The dissatisfaction with OEMs is also cultural. CIOs believe brands often chase quarterly sales quotas, limiting their ability to act as long-term strategic advisors. Ninad Raje, CIO of Jaguar Group, summed it up: "We are consolidating IT vendors, but in cybersecurity each layer requires a specialist. Partners who act as orchestrators across these vendors create the most value." The clear takeaway is that CIOs want solutions, not sales pitches—and partners are stepping in to fill that gap.



Analysts confirm this transformation is irreversible. Anuj Singhal, Founder and Chief Analyst, notes: "Forget the 'trusted advisor' moniker; become a 'success partner' because shared-risk agreements are reshaping the channel landscape." More than 45% of Indian channel firms already describe their model as outcome-focused, tying payments to client success metrics rather than product volumes. Forrester's Ted Schadler reinforces this view: "Leading firms develop advanced partner strategies that focus on outcomes, share risk, align incentives to motivate all parties, and work in blended teams to achieve better results."

For India's partner community, the opportunity is historic. CIOs are openly signaling that they no longer want fragmented engagements with OEMs that lack contextual

innovation. Instead, they prefer partners who can act as a single point of contact across cloud, security, AI, and industry-specific solutions. By 2026, partners who evolve into co-creators

bringing cross-industry expertise, managing complex vendor stacks, and aligning to business KPIs will not just thrive; they will define the future of India's digital economy. Those who cling

to product-pushing models risk being bypassed as CIOs decisively pivot toward partners that put innovation and customer success at the center.

ACROSS THE LINES

AN INTERVIEW WITH UDAY MOHAN,
COO, HAVAS MEDIA INDIA



The advertising and media industry is being reshaped by AI, data, and sustainability. In India, where digital adoption is accelerating and ESG expectations are rising, agencies are no longer just media buyers—they are becoming strategic orchestrators, blending technology, creativity, and accountability.

At the center of this shift is Uday Mohan, COO of Havas Media India. Known for his focus on integration and innovation, he believes agencies and partners must evolve into solution providers that manage complexity, drive outcomes, and embed sustainability into every campaign. In this exclusive conversation with itVARnews, Uday shares how Havas is navigating AI, data, and ESG—and why 2026 will be a defining year for the partner ecosystem.

On AI, Data, Sustainability and the Future Role of Partners in AdTech

■ **You recently spoke about the evolving intersection of data, AI, and sustainability in advertising. From your vantage point, how are agencies like Havas adapting to this shift in 2025–26?**

The advertising landscape is undergoing a deep transformation. The lines between agencies and tech platforms are blurring — where previously agencies focused on media strategy, creatives, and campaign execution, today we’re expected to integrate data, automation, AI models, performance attribution, and even sustainability metrics into our offerings. Platforms are now enabling execution at scale — but agencies still bring the glue: integration, accountability, contextual insight, and the ability to compose strategy across domains. In this environment, success will go to those who can bring all of it together as a unified offering.

■ **That’s a big shift. In India, digital media is crowded with startups, niche tools, and MarTech platforms. How does Havas position itself in that crowded ecosystem?**

We see platforms as

partners in that ecosystem rather than adversaries. Many AdTech / MarTech players offer specialized tools — real-time attribution, AI-powered campaign optimizers, customer journey analytics, etc. What clients want from Havas is to orchestrate these tools, turn them into coherent campaigns, and ensure they achieve business metrics,

one roadmap. In 2026 especially, as digital maturity deepens, partners who can offer integration, vertical expertise, data glue, and ensure compliance will leapfrog. The partner that can “own the integration surface” between platforms, AI, data pipelines, measurement, and business strategy — that partner wins.

“Today, clients expect agencies not just to run campaigns, but to orchestrate technology, data, and creativity into unified solutions that drive business growth.”

not just technical outputs. So we collaborate, integrate, sometimes invest, sometimes co-build — but always with a focus on accountability and outcomes.

■ **Given that, how do you see the role of channel partners or solution partners in this ad + tech ecosystem?**

Partners are going to become even more critical. Media firms, tech firms, platforms — clients don’t want to deal directly with 10 point-solution vendors. They want one interface,

itV: You also emphasize sustainability in your work. How do you integrate ESG or sustainability into media & data strategies?

UM: There’s been a past risk of “greenwashing” media campaigns, but now it’s more substantive. Clients want to measure carbon footprint of media, sustainable ad delivery (e.g. cleaner data centers, efficient routing), and integrate ESG KPIs in campaign scorecards. We treat sustainability as a design constraint: when building data stacks, campaign flows, or measurement layers, we factor in energy, waste, privacy, and ethics. It’s both

a brand expectation and a regulatory expectation increasingly.

■ **AI is a buzzword everywhere — practical or overhyped?**

It is very real — but what matters is how you apply AI. Using LLMs or data models superficially is easy; getting them to predict, optimize, flag risk, detect bias, or automate creative loops is harder. We’re in the phase where AI is a co-pilot, not a replacement. Clients will expect that kind of judicious application.

■ **Finally, as you look ahead to 2026, what would be your message to partners, VARs, and tech providers who want to thrive in the ad + media + data domain?**

Focus on outcomes, not tools. Don’t pitch product stacks — pitch business value, predictive models, integrated execution, compliance, trust. Be willing to assume some risk, tie your fee to performance, not just deployment. Become orchestrators of ecosystems, not just resellers. In 2026, the partner that becomes the single interface between the client’s business goals and the complex tech stack will dominate.

AI Is Hardware's Moment Again – Channel Partners in the Sweet Spot for OEMs



Artificial intelligence has ignited a new hardware renaissance, pulling servers, chips, memory, and end-user devices back to center stage after years where cloud and software dominated digital transformation. What was once dismissed as back-office “plumbing” has become the strategic core of enterprise innovation. Channel partners—system integrators, managed service providers, VARs, and VADs—are now in the sweet spot, helping OEMs deliver this new generation of AI-ready hardware to customers across verticals.

AI Gold Rush Reignites Hardware Demand

Generative AI and large-scale analytics require unprecedented computing power, fueling explosive demand for GPUs, accelerators, memory, and

high-speed networking. The data center GPU market has multiplied several times over in just two years, with enterprise buyers scrambling for scarce supply of advanced chips like NVIDIA's H100/H200. High-bandwidth memory (HBM) sales have doubled in a year, and revenue is on track for double-digit growth through 2030, making memory fabs and packaging plants critical bottlenecks in the AI supply chain.

This surge isn't confined to data centers. AI-enabled laptops and PCs are selling at record pace, as enterprises roll out devices with built-in AI accelerators to employees. These AI laptops promise faster performance, integrated copilots, and the ability to run inference locally instead of relying solely on cloud APIs. Analysts forecast tens of millions of AI-capable PCs

will ship over the next two years, creating one of the fastest adoption curves in PC history. For the channel, this is an enormous opportunity: partners can bundle AI laptops with deployment services, cybersecurity, and managed offerings, turning a commodity refresh cycle into a high-value enterprise transformation.

Data Centers Stretch to Meet AI's Needs

At the infrastructure level, data centers are expanding at breakneck pace. Hyperscalers accounted for nearly 80% of global investment last year, while colocation providers grew supply by over 40% in a single year. Yet demand continues to outpace supply, with major hubs like Northern Virginia reporting near-zero vacancy as enterprises pre-lease capacity years in advance for

AI clusters.

Power and cooling are becoming boardroom issues. AI clusters draw enormous energy loads, with projections suggesting data center electricity demand could more than double by 2030. This is driving innovation in high-density rack design, immersion and liquid cooling, and even alternative energy sources such as nuclear and large-scale renewables. AI has made physical infrastructure—once an afterthought—an urgent priority again.

Cross-Vertical Adoption Drives Global Demand

Unlike past IT booms, AI is cutting across every vertical. Hospitals are investing in AI accelerators for diagnostics and medical imaging. Banks are building private GPU clouds for fraud detection and risk modeling. Retailers are deploying AI laptops and edge devices for demand forecasting and customer personalization. Governments are exploring AI for defense, public services, and smart city infrastructure.

Customer needs vary—healthcare prioritizes compliance and low latency, retail emphasizes edge compute, BFSI demands security and auditability—but they all share a renewed focus on physical infrastructure as the foundation for AI-driven outcomes.

Channel Implications: SIs, MSPs, VARs and VADs

The channel is at the heart of this transformation:

- System Integrators (SIs): Designing and deploying end-to-end AI platforms that blend cutting-edge hardware with legacy systems. Many are creating AI Centers of Excellence to rapidly roll out industry-specific solutions.
- Managed Service Providers (MSPs): Launching AI-as-a-service offerings, managing GPU clusters, and packaging ongoing support, optimization, and security. Revenue growth of 20%+ is expected as AI joins security as a top managed service driver.
- Value-Added Resellers (VARs): Refreshing portfolios with AI-optimized servers, storage, and AI laptops, adding services like deployment, training, and support. Some report 70%+ YoY growth by aligning with AI-driven refresh cycles.
- Value-Added Distributors (VADs): Stocking AI hardware, offering financing, and evolving into solution enablers with demo labs, training, and cloud partnerships. Strategic alliances with hyperscalers are giving partners access to hybrid and AI-ready cloud offerings.

Opportunities and Risks

The upside is massive: from surging laptop shipments to trillion-dollar opportunities in systems integration. For OEMs, channel partners are the force multipliers who can scale AI adoption across industries. For partners, AI's hardware moment is a chance to move higher up the value chain, expanding service revenues and cementing their role as strategic advisors.

Yet risks remain. GPU and memory shortages strain supply chains. Vendor concentration raises exposure if prices spike or allocations tighten. Cloud providers are bypassing the channel with direct AI services. And a shortage of skilled talent could limit partners' ability to deliver complex projects.

AI Hardware Renaissance

Still, the trajectory is clear: AI has re-energized the nuts and bolts of IT. Surging AI laptop sales show hardware innovation is back on every CIO's agenda. Data centers, memory, servers, and end-user devices are once again strategic battlegrounds. And in this environment, OEMs increasingly see channel partners as their sweet spot—the critical link between silicon and solutions, between infrastructure and outcomes.

For the channel, this is not just another refresh cycle—it's a renaissance. Those who embrace AI-ready hardware, hybrid cloud architectures, and industry-specific AI solutions will lead the way. Those who hesitate risk irrelevance. AI may be the brain, but hardware is the body—and the channel is the lifeblood powering this new era of enterprise transformation.

Freshworks Founder Girish Mathrubootham's Exit Raises Questions on Partner Trust

Freshworks' announcement that its founder and Executive Chairman, Girish Mathrubootham, will step down after a 15-year journey has sent ripples across the channel community. For over a decade and a half, Girish has been the face of the company's partner-first ethos, building a foundation of trust that has powered Freshworks' rise from a Chennai-based startup to a global SaaS leader. His vision and accessibility made partners feel like stakeholders in the company's success rather than mere distributors, and this relational trust has been a cornerstone of Freshworks' partner ecosystem.

The timing of his exit places a spotlight on how Freshworks will reassure its partner network going forward. Many resellers, system integrators, and channel collaborators have long valued the stability and transparency Girish embodied. With his departure, questions naturally arise: Will the new leadership continue to engage partners with the same fairness, openness, and collaborative spirit? For some, this uncertainty could slow momentum as they wait to see how strategic priorities evolve.

At the same time, a leadership transition of this magnitude can also present opportunities. A refreshed leadership team may sharpen focus on partner enablement, deepen investments in AI-driven platforms, and expand Freshworks' global reach. If handled with clarity and

consistency, the change could further strengthen partner confidence and create new avenues for growth.

For now, the partner community will be watching closely — not only for formal



GIRISH MATHRUBOOTHAM,
Founder and Executive
Chairman, Freshworks

announcements but also for the tone and frequency of Freshworks' engagements with them. Trust built steadily over 15 years does not disappear overnight, but it must be actively reinforced. The coming months will determine whether Freshworks can preserve the goodwill nurtured under Girish's leadership and carry that legacy into its next chapter of channel growth.

AI Agents Surge in Channel Partner Community: The Next Frontier in Value Creation



The channel partner ecosystem in India is witnessing a noticeable shift: AI agents are no longer experimental add-ons but fast becoming core enablers of partner value propositions. From lead qualification to operations automation, the trend is gaining steam — and the numbers back it up. According to Deloitte’s State of GenAI report, over 80% of Indian organizations are exploring Agentic AI workflows, and more than half are already eyeing multi-agent systems to coordinate tasks without constant human oversight. Meanwhile, Microsoft’s latest Work Trend Index

reveals that 93% of Indian executives plan to deploy AI agents within the next 12–18 months, making India one of the most aggressive markets globally for agent adoption.

Market Growth & Channel Impact

The commercial stakes are high. The Indian AI agents market, currently valued at approximately USD 276 million, is projected to balloon to USD 3,553.6 million by 2030, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 53.5%. For channel partners, this signals a massive addressable opportunity: to embed agents into client solution

stacks, offer “Agent-as-a-Service,” and differentiate using automation and autonomy rather than just products.

Already, major ecosystem players are acting. In April 2025, Tech Data partnered with NVIDIA to distribute full-stack generative AI and data-center solutions across India — effectively arming channel partners with the infrastructure and AI backbone they need to build intelligent agent systems.

Use Cases Emerging in Partner Playbooks

Sales & Lead Pipeline Automation: AI agents

can triage inbound leads, suggest next-best actions, and free up human sellers for more complex opportunities.

Intelligent Support & Managed Services: In maintenance, monitoring, and incident resolution, agents can predict faults, take corrective actions, or escalate only when needed.

Conversational Interfaces & Bots: Agents embedded in client systems (CRM, ERP, dashboards) can handle queries, data access, or simple workflows via chat or voice.

Partner Marketing & Campaign Workflow: Agents can automate co-marketing campaign execution, optimize media, and run feedback loops.

Governance, Security & Oversight: Partners who master agent control — identity, trust, audit trails, compliance — will win in regulated domains.

The road isn’t without hurdles. Agents require tight integration with client data, legacy systems, and domain-specific logic — which many partners lack today. Trust is another concern: clients will expect guarantees around correctness, auditability, and failure handling. However, partners that build agent control platforms, invest in explainability & audit frameworks, and deliver domain-tuned agent models will hold a strategic edge. In many ways, the role of the channel is morphing from “reseller” to “agent architect & steward.”

AI Server Boom Powers Dell to Record Revenue—But PCs and Storage Lag Behind



Dell Technologies is riding a tidal wave of AI demand, delivering a landmark quarter with \$29.8 billion in revenues—a 19% year-over-year leap. The real engine behind this surge: AI server orders. Dell shipped \$8.2 billion in AI servers during Q2 and has now surpassed \$10 billion in AI solution shipments for the first half of fiscal year 2026. The company raised its full-year AI server forecast to a hefty \$20 billion.

This blockbuster growth was fuelled by Dell's Infrastructure Solutions Group (ISG), which includes servers, networking, and AI infrastructure. ISG posted a staggering 44% revenue increase, with servers and networking alone vaulting 69% year-on-year. Meanwhile, storage sales drooped, and Dell's traditional PC and monitor division—the Client Solutions Group (CSG)—barely budged, inching up just 1%. Consumer PC sales actually fell 7%.

Dell's COO Jeff Clarke emphasized that this AI momentum is unlike anything the company has seen. "It's the single largest number of customers that we sold to in a quarter... roughly 50% new and 50% returning," Clarke said, pointing to healthy growth across sectors from

finance to healthcare and higher education. Crucially, many of the AI projects are advancing from proof-of-concept to production—strong indicators of long-term demand.

On the financial front, adjusted earnings per share came in at \$2.32—slightly above Wall Street's target—and net profit climbed 32% year-on-year to \$1.16 billion. Operational cash flow nearly doubled to \$2.5 billion, signaling healthy liquidity.

But it wasn't all sunshine. Dell's stock slipped roughly 5–10% in after-hours trading. The market soured on forward guidance: Q3 profit estimates fell below analysts' expectations, even as the full-year outlook was revised upward. Revenue projections now sit at \$105–\$109 billion, with EPS at \$9.55—both revised higher to reflect AI demand.

Despite this hiccup, Dell's AI strategy appears bulletproof. With a record backlog of AI orders, surging cash flow, and customers transitioning AI from pilot to practice, Dell is outpacing the broader market shifts—putting it at the vanguard of the AI infrastructure boom. The challenge now lies in reviving storage and rekindling PC growth to deliver a more balanced performance.

E2E Bagged ₹177 Crore MeitY GPU Order: Channel Partners Eye AI Growth Opportunities



E2E bagged a ₹177-crore order from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the IndiaAI Mission to deliver advanced GPU infrastructure, including H100 and H200 SXM units with InfiniBand fabric. The project, designed to provide nearly 130 million GPU hours, positions India on the global stage for AI compute and foundational model development. For the channel ecosystem, however, this announcement is more than a milestone contract—it is a clear signal of the opportunities AI-led digital infrastructure is unlocking.

For distributors, VARs, and system integrators, the demand for GPU-powered workloads is set to ripple across sectors like healthcare, BFSI, manufacturing, and education. Partners now have the chance to build services around deployment, integration, and workload optimization, while also layering solutions for cybersecurity, compliance, and lifecycle management. This move also highlights how government contracts serve as catalysts for partner ecosystems, creating downstream opportunities in managed services, cloud orchestration, and vertical-specific AI solutions.

Channel partners that align early with GPU-driven architectures and AI-ready cloud offerings will be best positioned to ride this wave. As India's AI journey accelerates, the ecosystem will need not just infrastructure providers like E2E, but also a network of partners who can translate raw compute power into industry-specific outcomes. For the channel community, the message is clear—AI is not a distant trend; it is a business opportunity unfolding right now.

Qlik Open Lakehouse Now Generally Available, Giving Enterprises Rapid, AI-Ready Data on Apache Iceberg

Qlik Open Lakehouse includes Amazon Athena support and multi-engine access, plus deployment in the customer's virtual private cloud (VPC) with automatic Iceberg optimization and built-in data quality and lineage



Qlik, a global leader in data integration, data quality, analytics, and artificial intelligence (AI), today announced the general availability of Qlik Open Lakehouse, a fully managed Apache Iceberg service in Qlik Talend Cloud® that delivers real-time pipelines, automated Iceberg optimization, and true multi-engine access without lock-in. The result is an AI-ready data foundation that cuts time and cost between data and action.

Deployed in the customer's own cloud account with bring-your-own-compute, Qlik Open Lakehouse combines

change data capture (CDC) ingestion with automatic Iceberg optimization and multi-engine access so teams can use the tools they already rely on, including Amazon Athena, Snowflake, Spark, Trino, and Amazon SageMaker for machine learning (ML). In preview, customers reported faster queries and meaningfully lower infrastructure costs as they shifted workloads from proprietary warehouses to open, optimized Iceberg tables.

"AI stalls when data is slow, fragmented, and expensive," said Mike Capone, CEO of Qlik. "Qlik Open Lakehouse fixes that by giving teams a real-time,

Iceberg-based foundation they can run in their cloud at enterprise scale and query with the engines they already use. It brings performance, cost control, and governance into one motion so decisions happen faster and models improve every day."

What's new

- General availability of Qlik Open Lakehouse in Qlik Talend Cloud, deployed in the customer's VPC with bring-your-own-compute for full security, performance, and cost control
- Multi-engine access on day one, including Amazon Athena support

so teams can query Iceberg tables serverlessly alongside Qlik analytics and other engines

- SageMaker-ready data stored in governed Iceberg tables on Amazon Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3), making it easier for ML teams to access, prepare, and train models without building additional data copies
- Automatic Iceberg optimization for compaction, partitioning, and metadata maintenance to improve query performance and reduce storage footprint
- Low-latency pipelines from hundreds of sources using CDC, with built-in data quality, lineage, cataloging, and FinOps observability
- Qlik Analytics™ and AI on top with the Qlik engine and workflow automation so insights can trigger actions in business systems

"The general availability of Qlik Open Lakehouse translates Qlik's long-term strategy into a tangible reality for companies adopting open table formats," said Mike Leone, Principal Analyst, Enterprise Strategy Group. "Its ability to handle large amounts of data quickly, optimize it in real time, and work with different tools in the cloud

solves common problems with data being out of date, slow, or expensive. Because it also has Qlik's robust integration and data governance, it provides a strong platform for AI and analytics that teams can adopt without having to completely rebuild their systems or switch to new tools."

Why it matters

AI value is bottlenecked by data. Qlik Open Lakehouse closes that gap by giving enterprises data and analytics foundations for AI: trusted, explainable, and up-to-date data in an open format that any engine can query. The result is faster decision-making, lower total cost, and freedom of choice across analytics and ML. In preview, customers saw up to 5x faster query performance and up to 50 percent lower infrastructure cost as they removed unnecessary copies and tuned Iceberg tables at scale.

How it works

Open by design: Data lives in Apache Iceberg on customer object storage. The same tables are queryable from Qlik, Amazon Athena, Snowflake, Spark, Trino, and ML services like Amazon SageMaker.

Real time by default: CDC keeps tables current. Automatic optimization maintains performance as data grows.

Governed and trusted: Integrated data quality rules, lineage, cataloging, and access controls provide the assurance AI and regulated workloads require.

Built for action: The Qlik engine and automation connect insight to workflow, so teams do not stop at dashboards.

Availability

Qlik Open Lakehouse is available today for Qlik Talend Cloud customers, including Amazon Athena support. SageMaker integration for model training and inference on Iceberg data is supported via standard AWS patterns. Additional ecosystem updates are targeted for Q4 2025.

Channel at the Crossroads: Nutanix Gains 2,700 Customers as VMware Turbulence Deepens



Broadcom's changes leave cracks in VMware's armor, and partners see Nutanix stepping into the gap.

For months, the channel has watched Broadcom's takeover of VMware with a mix of caution and concern. Shifts in licensing, partner tiers, and sales strategies have sparked unease among customers and solution providers alike. The uncertainty has created a vacuum and Nutanix seems determined to fill it.

The company reported adding 2,700 new customers in its fiscal year, alongside an 18 percent sales jump. More telling than the numbers is the narrative behind them: most of these wins came through partner-led conversations, as system integrators and VARs guided clients searching for stability and flexibility.

Nutanix's approach is notably channel-friendly. By forging OEM alliances with Dell and Pure Storage, the company enables enterprises to retain existing hardware investments

while swapping out the virtualization software stack. For partners, that's a smoother migration pitch protecting customer CAPEX while opening doors for fresh service revenue.

Yet the opportunity is far larger than one fiscal year's haul. VMware still boasts an installed base of 200,000 customers worldwide, dwarfing Nutanix's 29,000. The path ahead, even by Nutanix's own admission, is a 5–10 year market-share marathon. For the channel, that translates into a long runway of consultative engagements, migrations, and managed service upsells.

The message for itVARnews readers is clear: this isn't just a vendor rivalry—it's a channel-driven shift in the data center landscape. Customers are looking for guidance, and partners hold the keys. Those who move quickly, build migration playbooks, and align with Nutanix's momentum stand to redefine their role in the enterprise stack for years to come.



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Cisco Elevates the SOC with Agentic AI for Faster Threat Response and Reduced Complexity

Splunk Enterprise Security Premier Edition and Essentials Edition advance unified threat detection and response



Cisco today introduced Splunk Enterprise Security Essentials Edition and Splunk Enterprise Security Premier Edition, providing customers two agentic AI-powered SecOps options that unify security workflows across threat detection, investigation, and response (TDIR). Delivered within Splunk Enterprise Security 8.2 – a market-leading SIEM solution – these advancements streamline offerings and empower customers with faster threat response and simplified security solutions. Cisco also unveiled a series of AI features that it intends to release to power the agentic Security Operations Centre (SOC) of the future, enabling analysts to focus on strategic decision-making while AI handles routine tasks.

With many Cisco security products already integrated with Splunk Enterprise Security, the latest features will place agentic AI at the core of the SOC and extend security intelligence seamlessly across the network. With Splunk, AI

agents do more than actively orchestrate and automate complex workflows; they transform manual tasks into proactive, autonomous security operations. This transformation streamlines comprehensive threat management, empowering security teams to act faster and more efficiently.

“Adversaries are already using AI, so defenders need to seize every possible advantage,” said Mike Horn, SVP and GM for Splunk Security. “Our security offerings unify detection, investigation, and response into a single, intuitive workspace, eliminating tool fragmentation and significantly boosting efficiency. Built-in AI can help cut alert noise and reduce investigation time from hours to minutes. Now every SOC can better position to stay ahead of advanced threats and empower analysts at every level.”

Powering the Agentic SOC

Many organizations drown in data but struggle

to know what matters and when to act. This leads to operational blind spots and inefficiencies across SecOps, ITOps, and engineering teams. It delays timely detection and response exposing the business to avoidable threats.

To help prevent these issues and build an agentic SOC with greater visibility and context, customers can select between two flexible solutions:

- **Splunk Enterprise Security Premier Edition:** Brings together Splunk Enterprise Security 8.2, Splunk SOAR, Splunk UEBA, and Splunk AI Assistant into a comprehensive offering with unified user experience.
- **Splunk Enterprise Security Essentials Edition:** Combines Splunk Enterprise Security 8.2 and Splunk AI Assistant in Security into a single offering with unified user experience.

“With today’s increasingly sophisticated threats and

sprawling attack surfaces, security teams can’t afford to waste time switching between fragmented tools and operating with siloed visibility,” said Michelle Abraham, Research Director, Security and Trust at IDC. “By integrating multiple security capabilities into a single, cohesive environment, security platforms empower organizations to move from reactive to proactive security, streamlining workflows, improving detection and response, and ultimately reducing risk.”

Agentic AI for Security

As security challenges become more complex, organizations need integrated solutions that enhance visibility, accelerate detection, and streamline response. Additional AI-powered advancements are being released to strengthen security operations through the following:

- **Triage Agent:** AI-powered triage evaluates, prioritizes, and explains alerts—even in long-tail, low-volume cases—reducing analyst workload and surfacing what matters most.
- **Malware Reversal Agent:** AI-driven reversing explains malicious scripts line-by-line, extracts indicators of compromise, flags evasion, and groups recurring behaviours.
- **AI Playbook Authoring:** Translates natural language intent into functional, tested SOAR playbooks, with AI helping every step

of the way.

- **Response Importer:** AI agents adhere to standard operating procedures (SOPs) defined by the SOC and use multi-modal LLMs to import SOPs into Enterprise Security response plans.
- **AI-Enhanced Detection Library:** Helps detections to go from hypothesis to production in minutes.
- **Personalized Detection SPL Generator:** Personalizes detections within the library to align with unique SOC environments to make them usable out of the box.

Cisco Integrations Accelerate the SOC with Agentic AI

By integrating with Cisco's security solutions, Splunk helps security teams detect, investigate, and respond to threats with greater speed and precision. Expanded offerings will include:

- **Isovalent Runtime Security (eBPF) into Splunk:** Delivers immediate, granular visibility across your workloads, quickly pinpointing potential security breaches and infrastructure anomalies.
- **Federating Cisco Firewall Data:** Integration between Splunk Cloud Platform's Federated Search for Amazon S3 and Security Analytics and Logging (SAL) will enable analysts to perform security analytics on firewall logs stored in SAL directly from Splunk Cloud Platform without the need for ingestion.

Availability

- Splunk Enterprise Security Essentials Edition is available to all global regions, and Splunk Enterprise Security Premier Edition is available in early access.
- Splunk AI Assistant in Security is available to all global regions.
- Cisco integrations and additional capabilities including Triage Agent, AI Playbook Authoring, Response Importer, AI-Enhanced Detection Library and Personalized Detection SPL Generator will be available in 2026.

Syntel by Arvind Unveils WEMACX, an AI-Powered Omni-Channel Platform for Smarter Customer Engagement



Syntel by Arvind, a leading provider of enterprise communication, AV integration, and network infrastructure & surveillance solutions with over three decades of expertise, partnered with Vion consulting to launch WEMACX today. The digitally powered, AI-augmented omni-channel platform is designed to transform how enterprises connect with customers and manage operations.

WEMACX integrates seamlessly with existing telephony platforms to deliver fast onboarding, real-time engagement, and a unified customer experience across voice, chat, email, WhatsApp, SMS, and social channels. Positioned as more than a contact center, WEMACX functions as a complete business management suite. It brings together agentic AI with marketing, sales, supply chain, and project management capabilities, helping enterprises accelerate response times, reduce turn around, and enhance profitability.

Key features of WEMACX include Conversational AI and Smart Routing, offering real-time sentiment detection,

memory-enabled bots, and intelligent call flows for faster, more personalized interactions. It also provides Sales and Marketing Automation with AI-driven lead scoring, personalized outreach, and predictive analytics to improve conversions. Additionally, its Operations Intelligence strengthens supply chains through predictive maintenance, inventory optimization, and disruption monitoring.

Talking about the launch, Venkatesh Palanidas, Chief Strategy Officer, Syntel by Arvind, said, "With WEMACX, our vision is to empower enterprises to move beyond conventional customer interaction models. The platform brings intelligence, adaptability, and scale into everyday business functions, helping organizations stay agile, deepen customer trust, and unlock long-term value."

Available in CX Pro, CX Omni, and CX Biz packages, WEMACX is built to scale for businesses of all sizes. Whether for CRM, ticketing, or complete omni-channel management, enterprises can subscribe to the package that best suits their needs.

RAH Infotech and Aryaka Forge Strategic Alliance to Bring Unified SASE as a Service to India



RAH Infotech, India's leading value-added technology distributor, proudly announces a strategic collaboration with Aryaka, the pioneer in delivering Unified SASE as a Service, a fully converged networking and security solution. This alliance combines RAH Infotech's expansive channel network and deep expertise in digital infrastructure with Aryaka's award-winning Unified SASE solution to advance enterprise connectivity and cyber resilience across India.

Aryaka, Unified SASE as a Service integrates networking (SD-WAN), security (next-gen firewalls, Secure Web Gateway and more), and observability into a unified, cloud-native delivery model that simplifies operations and enhances performance. Emphasizing operational excellence and customer satisfaction, the Aryaka solution underscores their commitment to innovation and simplicity.

"We are thrilled to partner with Aryaka, a recognized leader in Unified SASE as a service," said Ashok Kumar, Founder and Managing Director at RAH Infotech. "This collaboration marks a transformative step in our mission to enrich our portfolio with solutions that converge networking, security, and observability. With Aryaka's advanced architecture and our robust distribution ecosystem, we are poised to deliver unmatched performance, agility, and operational simplicity to customers across sectors."

"India is undergoing a rapid digital transformation, and enterprises need secure, cloud-first connectivity to keep pace. Partnering with RAH Infotech allows us to bring Aryaka Unified SASE as a Service to a wider audience through RAH Infotech's strong channel network," commented Nitin Ahuja, General Manager and VP – APAC at Aryaka. "Together, we will empower Indian enterprises with global-grade networking and security delivered as a single, converged service, enabling digital transformation with unprecedented speed and security."

RAH Infotech will leverage its partner ecosystem across the Indian and SAARC markets to extend Aryaka's SASE capabilities especially appealing for enterprises undergoing digital transformation with demanding connectivity and security needs.

Vertiv acquires Generative AI software leader Waylay NV to enhance critical digital infrastructure operational intelligence, optimization, and services

Vertiv Holdings Co, a global leader in critical digital infrastructure, announced it has acquired Waylay NV, a Belgium-based leader in hyperautomation and generative AI software platforms, as part of its continued investment in AI-driven monitoring and control technologies for its power and cooling systems. Vertiv expects this investment to strengthen its ability to enable customers around the world to increase uptime, optimize energy usage, and enhance operational intelligence across their critical digital infrastructure.

As AI workloads continue to drive strong growth in data center demand, the need for intelligent, adaptive infrastructure continues to grow. AI-based digital services for power and cooling systems are essential to support the high-density, high-performance computing environments powering generative AI. These services support real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, and dynamic optimization of power and thermal performance. With the integration of Waylay's advanced technology, Vertiv is positioned to deliver these advanced capabilities at scale, helping customers meet the evolving demands of critical digital operations.



"With the addition of Waylay's technology and software-focused team, Vertiv will accelerate its vision of intelligent infrastructure — data-driven, proactive, and optimized for the world's most demanding environments," said Vertiv's CEO, Giordano Albertazzi. "We are excited about the operational efficiencies and the resilience that Vertiv's further augmented predictive capabilities can provide for our customers."

Founded in 2014, Waylay has developed an AI-driven hyperautomation software platform that enables workflow-based automation, system integration, and orchestration across a wide range of connected assets, enterprise applications, and cloud services. Among its capabilities are data analytics and orchestration scenarios that operate with unprecedented speed, significantly cutting the cost of integration and product deployment. The software can analyze real-time machine data, identify operational trends, and propose predictive actions that minimize downtime and improve system performance.

To learn more about Vertiv's comprehensive, end-to-end portfolio of power, cooling, and IT infrastructure solutions, including integrated racks, power distribution units, uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), thermal management systems, and digitized monitoring and lifecycle services,

Channel Partners 2026: From Product Pushers to Customer Co-Creators



The technology channel is in the midst of a transformation. By 2026, the role of partners has moved far beyond pushing vendor products into the market. CIOs, analysts, and channel leaders all point to the same trend: partners are becoming co-creators, delivering customer-defined outcomes instead of vendor-dictated sales.

For enterprise technology leaders, the expectation is clear—partners must help solve business problems. Stefano Bombara, Head of Technical Systems at Crédit Agricole Vita, explained it bluntly: “CIOs don’t want a partner who simply settles for a supply contract. Instead, the vendor must constantly offer new solutions for technologies, use cases, and methodological approaches. It’s in these processes that we expect proactivity.” This demand for deeper engagement is echoed

across geographies. Shane McDaniel, CIO of the City of Seguin, Texas, noted: “It’s not just a transactional relationship... It’s a true partner.” McDaniel praised a vendor that went beyond contractual terms to help his city achieve strategic goals—proof that CIOs value outcomes, not one-off sales.

Similarly, Parm Sandhu, CIO at ISSofBC in Canada, said the vendor selection process is no longer just about products. “It involves opening up my strategy, my vision, and my aspirations to the vendor so they can act as partners and advisors in meeting unique business needs. The more they understand what we’re doing... and where we want to get to, the better equipped they are to help us on that journey.”

Industry analysts confirm the shift toward customer-first models. Anuj Singhal founder and Chief Analyst,

urges partners to rethink their role: “Forget the ‘trusted advisor’ moniker; become a ‘success partner’ because shared risk agreements are reshaping the channel landscape.” Anuj notes that more than 45% of channel firms now describe their approach as outcome-focused or shared-risk, tying payments to customer results. Ted Schadler, VP & Principal Analyst at Forrester Research, highlights co-innovation as the new benchmark: “Leading firms develop advanced partner strategies that focus on outcomes, share risk, align incentives to motivate all parties, and work in blended teams to achieve better results.” According to Schadler, every company can adopt this model to co-create value with partners.

On the ground, channel leaders are seeing the same pressure. Jesse Grindeland, VP of Global Channels &

Alliances at Skyhigh Security, observed: “The days of vendors and VARs thriving purely on transactional efficiency are numbered. Buyers don’t just want a product; they want partners who understand their business, align with their strategic goals, and fill critical skill gaps.” He added that vendors and resellers alike must reposition as trusted advisors and solution providers.

Channel consultant and author Hans Peter Bech summarized the modern mandate: “The job of the channel partner is to find, win, make, keep and grow happy customers.” His view underlines that long-term growth comes from solving customer problems and delivering outcomes, not just meeting vendor quotas.

Each of these voices CIOs, analysts, and channel executives align on a single message: the channel must pivot to a customer-led, outcome-oriented approach. Instead of pushing the latest hardware or software, successful partners in 2026 are those who co-create solutions, invest in understanding client businesses, and commit to delivering tangible results. The partner of the AI era is not a vendor mouthpiece. They are the customer’s advocate, co-innovator, and trusted advisor. The shift away from vendor-driven sales models is now irreversible, and those who fail to adapt risk irrelevance.

Quote Courtesy: CIO dotcom

Tech Trailblazers: India's Partner Marketing Power List 2025

In today's hyper-competitive tech landscape, partner marketers are the unsung architects of growth. They are ecosystem orchestrators, brand amplifiers, alliance storytellers, and demand-generation maestros who

transform vendor-partner relationships into billion-dollar opportunities.

These leaders don't just run campaigns; they design influence, ignite trust, and mobilize entire ecosystems to accelerate cloud adoption,

cybersecurity readiness, and digital transformation across India.

At the frontline of this revolution are India's partner marketing trailblazers — shaping how the world's biggest tech companies

collaborate, co-innovate, and capture market share in one of the most dynamic digital economies on the planet. Meet the rainmakers of partner marketing who are rewriting the rules of the game in India.



NIKHIL SHARMA,
AWS

Driving partner success in the world's largest hyperscaler, Nikhil has become synonymous with enabling India's cloud ecosystem through scalable co-marketing and enablement.



KULDEEP SEHRAWAT,
IBM

Driving IBM's partner marketing play, Kuldeep ensures the tech giant's alliance ecosystem stays front and center in conversations on hybrid cloud and AI.



ASHISH SHAH,
Google Cloud

At the helm of partner marketing for Google Cloud in India, Ashish is known for curating campaigns that highlight joint innovation stories with customers across industries.



TARUN GOYAL,
Dell Technologies

A veteran in channel and partner storytelling, Tarun ensures Dell's extensive partner base stays engaged, competitive, and aligned to the hybrid cloud future.



TARUN GOYAL,
Dell Technologies

The face of partner marketing at Hewlett Packard Enterprise India, Shanny is known for scaling campaigns that connect HPE's innovations with partner growth.



SWARNIM DAMANI,
Commvault

Championing data protection and backup as a business enabler, Swarnim leads Commvault's partner ecosystem with an eye for storytelling and co-created customer wins.



SUJAY SHETTY, HPE Networking

Sujay spearheads HPE's Global SIs Partner Marketing strategy, keeping the company's alliance ecosystem at the forefront of conversations around HPE Networking — Aruba and Juniper. His focus on strategic engagement with system integrators, co-creation initiatives, and ecosystem positioning has been instrumental in establishing HPE Networking as a powerful growth engine for enterprises.



CHITIZ GUPTA,
Nutanix

At Nutanix, Chitiz is a driver of the “cloud operating model” narrative in India, working closely with partners to amplify hybrid cloud transformation.



MOHAMMED WASIF,
SAP

SAP’s Partner Marketing Director, Wasif anchors partner-led growth by aligning the SAP ecosystem with digital transformation priorities in India Inc.



ABHISHEK SHUKLA,
Salesforce

As Salesforce scales in India, Abhishek leads partner marketing with a focus on ecosystem enablement and joint customer wins.



SATISH NAIR,
CISCO

At Cisco India, Satish is known for building narratives that highlight how partner collaboration accelerates digital infrastructure growth.



NIKHIL SHARMA,
AWS

As Enterprise & Value Partner Marketing Manager for India & SAARC, Nachiketh has made partner-led campaigns a core pillar of Palo Alto’s growth story.



KRISHITA MOTWANI,
ServiceNow India

Krishita accelerates GTM synergy by empowering the partner ecosystem and leading co-marketing programs with global system integrators. Her emphasis on strategic collaboration, co-creation initiatives, and ecosystem positioning has been pivotal in strengthening ServiceNow’s role as a transformative growth engine for enterprises



JASON ALBERT,
Akamai

Leading partner marketing at Akamai India, Jason crafts narratives around content delivery and security powered by a robust partner base.



VIVEK DUVEDI,
Snowflake

A strong advocate of the modern data stack, Vivek is shaping Snowflake’s India ecosystem through compelling joint GTM initiatives with partners.



NISHITH SAMPAT,
NTT

Known for his deep expertise in revenue marketing and partner co-innovation, Nishith is a standout in the partner marketing leadership community.



KAMIA WAHI,
Apple India

As Partner Marketing Lead, Kamia drives Apple’s India strategy across notebooks and PCs, ensuring partners are central to Apple’s growth narrative.



TAMANNA TASNEEM,
Lenovo India

A force in partner and channel marketing, Tamanna ensures Lenovo’s expansive partner base translates into market leadership.



SAMSON ISSAC,
NetApp

Leading NetApp’s alliances and partner marketing in India, Samson is recognized for spotlighting partner success in hybrid cloud and storage.

What unites this diverse set of leaders is a shared ability to turn marketing into an engine of trust, scale, and revenue. They don’t just

amplify brand messages; they enable ecosystems, empower partners, and energize markets. In a country where ecosystems determine

success, these rainmakers prove that partner marketing is no longer the “back office of demand gen” but the frontline of digital growth.

India’s partner marketing leaders are not just keeping pace with change — they are defining it.

ISODA Elects New Leadership Team for 2025-2026 at AGM in Puri



The Infotech Software Dealers Association (ISODA), one of India's most respected associations of IT software resellers, solution providers, and channel leaders, has announced its new office bearers for the year 2025-2026. The announcement was made during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Puri, Odisha, attended by a

large gathering of members from across the country.

The AGM served as a platform for members to not only elect their new leadership team but also to discuss emerging industry trends, collaborative opportunities, and the challenges shaping the IT ecosystem in India. Over the years, ISODA has

built a strong reputation as a community-driven organization that acts as the unified voice of IT partners, enabling them to align with technology vendors, expand market opportunities, and advocate for industry-friendly policies.

This leadership team brings together seasoned professionals with decades of combined experience in the

IT distribution and solution space. Each of them has been actively involved in driving ISODA's initiatives in the past and is now poised to take the association into its next phase of growth.

A key highlight of this year's AGM was the election of Mr. Jitesh Chouhan, Director of Rubik Infotech, Ahmedabad, as the new President of ISODA. In his acceptance remarks, Mr. Chouhan emphasized the importance of collective growth and collaboration in today's rapidly changing technology environment. He highlighted his vision to strengthen ISODA's engagement with both members and OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers), expand knowledge-sharing programs, and drive initiatives that help partners remain competitive in an increasingly cloud and services-led IT economy.

The New Office Bearers for 2025-2026

The new leadership team elected to guide ISODA for the term 2025-2026 includes:

Chairman:	Mr. Vinod Kumar , Director ,Satcom Infotech , Mumbai
Vice Chairman:	Mr. Vimesh Avlani ,Director Graftronics , Mumbai
President:	Mr. Jitesh Chouhan, Director, Rubik Infotech, Ahmedabad
Vice President:	Mr. Lalit Chaudhary , Director, Aadhar Infonet, Jaipur
Treasurer:	Mr. Ravi Jalan, Director, Shakti Enterprises , Mumbai
Secretary:	Mr. Pradeep Daga , Director Suntronix , Chennai
Regional Secretary – West	Mr. Akshay Thakkar
Regional Secretary – East	Ms. Aditi Jhavar
Regional Secretary – Karnataka	Mr. Sanjay Srivastava
Regional Secretary – NCR / Delhi	Mr. Dalip Arora
Regional Secretary – Tamil Nadu	Mr. Yogesh Chordia
Regional Secretary – North East	Mr. Tapan Ghosal
Regional Secretary – Rajasthan	Mr. Dhiraj Vijayvergia

The newly elected team has laid out its priorities for the year ahead, which include:

- **Regional Expansion:** Extending ISODA's presence into tier-2 and tier-3 cities, ensuring that resellers across India are represented, supported, and connected to new business opportunities. Creating a truly national footprint for inclusive growth.
- **Digital Enablement:** Equipping members with digital tools, platforms, and training to modernize

their operations. Helping partners adopt cloud, automation, and AI-driven practices to stay competitive in a digital-first marketplace.

- **Industry Partnerships:** Strengthening ties with OEMs, distributors, and ecosystem stakeholders. Facilitating collaborations that unlock better margins, early access to technologies, and stronger go-to-market support for members.
- **Enhanced Member Services:** Providing value-added services such as legal advisory, market intelligence, training programs, and networking forums. Enhancing member engagement and creating a support system that drives both business and professional growth.

Outgoing office bearers extended their congratulations to the new team, expressing confidence that ISODA will continue to uphold its reputation as one of the most vibrant partner communities in the country. They acknowledged the growing challenges of digital transformation and the critical role ISODA plays in enabling partners to adapt and succeed.

With this new leadership at the helm, ISODA aims to further cement its role as a bridge between the partner community, technology vendors, and policymakers. The association has consistently worked toward empowering its members with market insights, opportunities for collaboration, and a platform for addressing industry concerns.

As the IT channel ecosystem evolves in response to disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and cybersecurity, the role of associations like ISODA becomes even more crucial. The 2025-2026 team has a clear mandate to guide members through this transition while ensuring that the partner community remains profitable, competitive, and future-ready.

The AGM at Puri was not just about elections; it reflected ISODA's spirit of community, knowledge exchange, and resilience. With fresh leadership energy, the association is set to enter another year of innovation, advocacy, and collective progress.

ASIRT Hosts AGM with First-Ever Contested Elections, Followed by TechDay #130



The Association of System Integrators and Retailers in Technology (ASIRT) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Hotel Parle International, Mumbai, marking a milestone with its first-ever contested elections and the 130th edition of its flagship TechDay.

Bhatt (Gaj Data Solutions LLP) narrowly missed out. The secure e-ballot process set a benchmark for democratic participation within the association.

Post-AGM, TechDay #130 featured Alcatel Lucent Enterprise, which presented new solutions and strategies to help system integrators strengthen



The AGM saw strong member participation with approval of past minutes, financials, and a review of annual activities, reinforcing ASIRT's culture of transparency and collaboration. Earlier in the day, members voted digitally in the association's inaugural contested elections. Four candidates vied for three Board positions, with Hiren Kuvadia (Data Skill Systems), Kartik Kaji (Ktronics), and Rohan Shah (Jet Refill World) elected, while Gaurang

their service portfolios and seize growth opportunities in the evolving IT market. The event concluded with ASIRT's signature networking dinner, providing members an opportunity to connect and celebrate a landmark day for the association.

With this AGM and TechDay, ASIRT reaffirmed its role as one of India's leading IT associations, committed to empowering system integrators and retailers through governance, knowledge sharing, and collaboration.

From B2B to B2C to H2H: Why Human-to-Human is the Future of Marketing in 2026



For decades, the line between Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) marketing was sharp and clearly drawn. B2B marketers focused on relationship-building, technical expertise, and long, consultative sales cycles. Their approach was about trust, product knowledge, and logic-driven decisions. B2C marketers, on the other hand, thrived on emotional triggers, brand loyalty, and high-frequency mass-market campaigns. But in 2025, that line is no longer visible.

Accelerated by rapid digitization, AI-powered personalization, and shifting buyer expectations, the B2B world is increasingly adopting B2C playbooks — but with one crucial twist. At the heart of this transformation is a customer-first approach powered by first-party intent data, hyper-personalization, and now — a direct revenue accountability mindset. The new mantra: there's no such thing as B2B or B2C anymore — it's H2H, Human

to Human.

The shift to H2H thinking is not just cosmetic — it's structural. Modern B2B buyers are no longer faceless committees sitting in boardrooms, hidden behind multiple layers of procurement bureaucracy. They're the same people who shop on Amazon, binge-watch Netflix, browse Instagram for ideas, and read peer reviews before making a purchase — both in their personal and professional lives. This convergence of behaviors means that their personal buying habits are directly shaping their professional buying expectations. They expect speed — not week-long proposal turnarounds. They expect personalization — generic outreach is immediately deleted or ignored. They expect frictionless access — if your buying journey is clunky, they will quickly move to a competitor offering a smoother digital experience. This expectation shift is reflected in research, with a recent Gartner study

revealing that 77% of B2B buyers describe their last purchase as “complex” or “difficult”. Forward-thinking marketers are determined to change this, and the answer lies in personalization at scale — but with a big caveat. Hyper-personalization isn't just about recognizing someone from your “wishlist persona” in an event attendee list and sending them a generic follow-up. That's surface-level targeting. True personalization is about continuously capturing, interpreting, and acting on first-party intent signals — the real-time behavioral and engagement data that reveals not just who your prospects are, but what they care about right now.

This means that the first step to creating an effective Target Account List (TAL) in 2025 is to redefine the process entirely. Instead of relying on static buyer personas that haven't been updated in months, marketers must root TAL creation in first-party intent-based data. This involves integrating event engagement data, website analytics, content consumption patterns, and interaction histories into a living, evolving intelligence layer. The moment you see a spike in engagement from an account — whether it's downloading a whitepaper, watching a webinar, or asking a pointed question during a roundtable — you have a signal. Acting on it immediately with relevant content, conversations, and

offers is what transforms personalization from “creepy” or “generic” into genuinely helpful. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are making this possible at scale. Modern marketing technology can now analyze vast amounts of buyer behavior data in real time, identify patterns, and recommend the next best action for every individual in your audience.

Instead of blasting “Join our webinar” to an entire database, a manufacturing software vendor can now send a tailored invite: “John, since you attended our session on predictive maintenance, we thought you'd love this deep dive on AI in supply chain resilience.” This isn't just personalization — it's contextual relevance, and it's the currency of trust in the digital age.

Alongside hyper-personalization, the emotional side of marketing — historically the domain of B2C — is becoming a critical lever in B2B. Emotional storytelling is no longer “fluff” but a proven driver of engagement and conversion. Brands like Cisco have shifted their narratives away from purely technical specifications toward stories about how their technology enables remote classrooms, supports telemedicine in rural areas, and connects disaster relief efforts. By humanizing the product and aligning it with the buyer's deeper goals, they create an emotional connection that outlasts the transaction. This emotional

engagement is strengthened by omnichannel consistency. Today's B2B buyer journey is not linear. A prospect might first see your brand in a LinkedIn post, later watch a product demo on YouTube, then attend a virtual roundtable, and finally read a case study on your website before talking to sales. This demands a coherent and consistent brand experience across all channels and touchpoints. Fragmented messaging creates friction; consistent messaging builds trust. However, technology alone isn't enough. While tools like Account-Based

Marketing (ABM) platforms, AI-driven CRM systems, and intent data trackers enable customer-first B2B marketing, technology without strategy is just noise. A customer-first strategy demands three core pillars: deep buyer personas (enriched with real-time intent data), content mapping (delivering the right content at the right stage of the journey), and continuous feedback loops (using surveys, NPS scores, and behavioral analytics to refine engagement).

Marketers' New KPI in the AI Era: Revenue Generation

The AI-driven marketing revolution has introduced a new level of transparency — and with it, a new expectation. Marketing leaders are no longer measured solely on engagement metrics like impressions, clicks, or MQs. In 2025, revenue generation has emerged as the ultimate marketing KPI. AI has made attribution more accurate, enabling organizations to

see exactly which campaigns, channels, and content pieces contributed to closed deals and recurring revenue. This level of insight means marketers can no longer hide behind "brand lift" or "pipeline influence" alone — they are now directly accountable for driving measurable revenue outcomes. First-party intent data plays a critical role here. When marketers build campaigns based on verified engagement signals from their own ecosystem — not rented lists or vague third-party scores — they increase the probability of conversion. And when AI connects these intent-driven activities to actual deal outcomes, marketing's value becomes undeniable in the boardroom. In many high-performing organizations, CMOs are now sharing revenue targets with sales leaders, blurring the line between demand generation and deal closure.

The result? Budgets are being allocated more strategically. Campaigns that don't show a path to revenue are being cut, and those demonstrating a strong revenue influence get scaled rapidly. The marketing department is no longer just the "cost center" — it's evolving into a revenue growth engine, with AI and intent data as the fuel.

One clear example of this evolution came at the SAP AI Now ANZ event. Rather than delivering product-heavy presentations, SAP centered the event around real customer success stories — from small startups to global enterprises — that demonstrated tangible ROI and human impact. CXO TV observed that attendee

engagement scores rose sharply compared to previous years. The key drivers were live interactive polls, breakout sessions tailored to industry-specific challenges, and AI-powered post-event follow-ups delivering content that was directly relevant to each attendee's expressed interest. This wasn't personalization for the sake of it — it was hyper-personalization rooted in real-time, first-party intent data, and directly connected to pipeline acceleration.

This evolution is being championed not just by CMOs, but by CEOs, CIOs, and even CFOs. The reasons are clear. Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) is now a boardroom KPI, and retention is far more cost-effective than acquisition. Brand experience is no longer just a marketing concern — it impacts investor confidence and stock performance. In this climate, a CEO ignoring customer-first, intent-driven strategies is a CEO gambling with long-term profitability. The risk of ignoring this shift is severe. Companies clinging to old-school B2B tactics face losing buyers to competitors with faster, more personalized engagement. They risk longer sales cycles due to disconnected communication and declining engagement in marketing campaigns. In a digitally saturated world, being relevant is more important than being big. Looking ahead, the road for B2B marketing is clear. Hyper-personalized content will become the standard, with AI delivering Netflix-style recommendation engines for enterprise buyers. Video-first storytelling — from short-form social |

content to immersive live streams — will replace static PDFs as the top engagement format. Digital journeys will increasingly be human-led at critical moments, with sales teams stepping in like luxury retail advisors to guide the decision at the right time. And perhaps most significantly, brands will double down on community-building, creating niche peer-to-peer spaces where decision-makers can connect, share insights, and co-create solutions.

In conclusion, the transformation of B2B into a B2C-like, customer-first, H2H-driven model is not a passing trend — it's the new standard. Decision-makers no longer separate their personal and professional expectations. They want speed, personalization, empathy, and now — clear proof of revenue impact — in every interaction. The only way to deliver this is by grounding every strategy in first-party intent signals and real-time behavioral insights, not assumptions. TALs should no longer be a static wishlist of companies, but a living, breathing map of where interest is already blooming and revenue potential is measurable. As the saying now goes in forward-looking marketing circles: "There's no B2B. There's no B2C. There's only H2H — Human to Human."

At CXO TV, we'll continue tracking and amplifying this shift, bringing you insights from leaders who are not just adapting to change but using it to rewrite the rules of engagement — and prove that in the AI era, marketing isn't just about creating demand, it's about closing deals.

Oracle–OpenAI Mega Deal Raises AI Market Bubble Concerns



Oracle's blockbuster \$300 billion contract with OpenAI has become one of the most closely watched developments in the global technology market. The deal, which secures Oracle as OpenAI's preferred cloud infrastructure provider from 2027 onwards, is being hailed as a milestone in the race to dominate the AI era. But experts are sounding alarms that this might be the start of a dangerous bubble.

At its core, the agreement guarantees OpenAI massive compute power on Oracle's cloud platforms, helping the ChatGPT maker expand its AI services. Oracle has disclosed \$455 billion in future performance

obligations, with OpenAI's deal accounting for the lion's share. Industry analysts note that no other single contract in cloud history has matched this scale. However, financial watchdogs are uneasy. Moody's Investors Service has flagged significant counterparty risk, warning that Oracle's heavy reliance on a handful of AI customers could backfire if any of them stumble. The ratings agency has already shifted Oracle's outlook from stable to negative, citing the company's rising debt and pressure on cash flows as it shoulders such gigantic infrastructure commitments.

Experts also question whether OpenAI's revenue streams can support this

level of commitment. Current annual revenue is estimated between \$10 billion and \$12 billion, a figure dwarfed by the multiyear spend outlined in the Oracle contract. Critics fear these projections assume relentless growth that may not materialize, especially as energy costs, regulation, and customer adoption pressures mount. Some observers are drawing parallels to past tech bubbles. Analysts from MIT and Forrester warn that inflated expectations around AI—without matching near-term business value—mirror the patterns of the dot-com era. AI pilots frequently fail to deliver measurable ROI, raising the risk that enthusiasm is running far ahead of actual outcomes.

For CIOs and enterprise buyers, the deal is a wake-up call. Contracts of this scale highlight the importance of stress-testing vendor dependencies, building in flexibility clauses, and ensuring backup infrastructure options. The financial sustainability of cloud providers is now just as critical as their technological capabilities. Oracle, meanwhile, insists that the partnership positions it as the backbone of the AI economy. According to CXO TV "This Oracle-OpenAI deal is both a signal and a warning. The AI era demands ambition—but unchecked ambition without financial guardrails is how bubbles form."

How CIOs Are Evolving from Back-Office IT Managers to Strategic Business Leaders ?

For decades, the Chief Information Officer was seen as the custodian of IT — responsible for uptime, vendor contracts, and keeping the lights on. Today, that perception has been upended. Across industries and regions, CIOs are no longer relegated to the back office; they have become front-line strategic leaders shaping how enterprises innovate, compete, and grow.

The shift is driven by the fact that technology is no longer a support function — it is the business. AI, cloud, data, and cybersecurity define customer experience, revenue models, and competitive advantage. Boards and CEOs now look to their CIOs to deliver not only secure infrastructure but also strategic insights and pathways to growth.

It is a great time to be a CIO. IT, as a discipline, has emerged to being a business



weapon. Never before has this role been as important inside businesses. You shift the thinking from being a cost center, and you are a party responsible for driving and enabling the company's business strategy. The opportunities are endless." Trevor Schulze, CIO at Genesys

This strategic repositioning has elevated CIOs into the C-suite spotlight worldwide. In the U.S., Europe, APAC, and the Middle East, CIOs are spearheading digital transformation programs, leading data-driven decision-making, and forging partnerships with CMOs and CFOs to unlock cross-functional value.

"Digital is not an IT function... Digital is sales, marketing, finance, legal, and operations everything. I spend significant time evangelizing, carrying the digital torch, and collaborating with my business partners on how to shift our investments from

run, to grow and transform," says Irvin Bishop, CIO of Black & Veatch. That's why we're increasingly seeing CIOs step into CEO and COO roles — because they're driving the agenda, not just the systems. New expectations require new skills. The global CIO must now combine deep technical expertise with fluency in

business models, customer design, and risk management. Equally important are softer skills — communication, storytelling, and change management — which allow CIOs to inspire teams and influence the boardroom.

For CIOs themselves, this is a defining moment. The challenge is balancing relentless technological change with the demand for strategic leadership. The opportunity is unprecedented: CIOs are positioned not just as operations overseers but as enterprise strategists and future CEOs.

The message for enterprises worldwide is clear: companies that empower their CIOs as strategic leaders will be more resilient, more innovative, and better equipped to thrive in a turbulent digital economy. The CIO is no longer just a manager of IT. They are the leaders charting the digital destiny of their organizations.



TREVOR SCHULZE,
CIO at Genesys



IRVIN BISHOP,
CIO of Black & Veatch

Channel Point



The SaaS era has defined enterprise IT for the past two decades—partners, system integrators, and managed service providers thrived by deploying platforms like Salesforce, Microsoft 365, and ServiceNow. But the horizon is shifting: by 2026, autonomous AI agents—not traditional SaaS—are projected to become the primary growth engine in enterprise technology. Analysts today peg the SaaS market at USD 266 billion in 2024, scaling toward the trillion dollar milestone by the early 2030s. Meanwhile, AI agents are powering upward at a staggering 40–45 percent CAGR, poised to become a transformative force in their own right.

Already, more than half of enterprises are exploring AI agents; over a third are piloting them; over one tenth are deploying them at scale. With Gartner predicting that 40 percent of enterprise applications will embed task specific agents by 2026 (up from under 5 percent today), we've hit what looks like a moment of inflection.

What sets agents apart is their ability to act on intent rather than require user interaction. Instead of clicking through dashboards, a CFO might simply say, "Optimize our Q2 budget and produce a board-ready report." AI agents can enrich leads, resolve service tickets, orchestrate end-to-end workflows—acting less like tools and more like autonomous teammates.

This transformation isn't optional for partners—it's existential. The margins in SaaS reselling are eroding as vendors go direct-to-customer and integrate AI themselves. But AI agents open whole new opportunity corridors—innovative service models, agent configuration services, and workflow orchestration built atop autonomous digital agents.

Welcome to the next chapter in enterprise IT: where software stops being a tool, and starts being a colleague.

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